



Beyond.

Autumn is dying, winter is come, Dead leaves are flying, the rivers are dumb: The wind's like a knife, one's fingers grow numb: There is snow on the mountains, ice in the pond. Winter is with us, but spring is beyond. The old year is dying, its glory is dead: The days are all flying, their brightness has fled: The bushes grow bare as the berries grow red: There is snow on the mountains, ice in the pond. The old year is dying, the new is beyond. We are all growing old, and life slips away: There is bare time for work, and still less for play. Though we think we grow wiser the longer we stay: But there's life in us yet, no need to despair. This world waxes old, but there's heaven beyond.

A MIDNIGHT MEETING.

I always did think my brother Solomon a little hard upon me, though I confess that there was reason for it. Mine were not exactly his ways, you see.

But could I help it that I was not born a parson, like Solomon? Every-body isn't born a parson. A long while ago, when we were boys together in tight blue jackets, with gilt buttons and deep drilled collars, I used to try with all my might and main to imitate Solomon, and when we were exhibited in society, I always echoed verbatim every remark I heard him make, so that I might share his fame. But that was, as I said, long ago, and gradually such close following in Solomon's steps grew tedious, so I chose a wider way. I was warned a great deal against this wider way, but somehow I lounged easily into it when I found how difficult it was to be as always as good as Solomon.

As I said, to begin with, I always did think Solomon a little hard upon me. I used to use language a little stronger than a Quaker's, he would maintain a marked and impressive silence himself; if I took anything stronger than lemonade, he would ask me to get water, to my intense discomfiture; and if—after we had grown up, and were living each of us alone in his own house—I took part in the harmless recreations of the age, I would for the next few days live in mortal terror of Solomon's appearance at the gate, with his book of sermons under his arm, and the odor of the fragrant sanctity pervading him. His figure, coming through the gate, even without that brown book under his arm, would have been impressive enough, but it never did appear so. He was curious in appearance, was Solomon, being emphatically long in every way. His legs and feet were long; his arms and hands were long; his hair was long; his nose was long; and his sermons were long. His coat-tails were uncommonly long, too; and, indeed, I think the only things that were not long about him were his sleeves.

After any particular jovial evening at the Squire's or at Jo Fleming's at Blagly (the Squire bred the best fighting cocks in the country except Jo's, and Jo's whiskey was the primest that ever escaped duty), you may guess that my heart didn't bound with joy at the sight of Solomon's long figure and long face: still, on ordinary occasions, Solomon and I were good friends, and I looked forward to the day when he should convert me to his own ways, and we should read the book of sermons aloud by turns through our old age. But then I knew there was plenty of time for that.

Well, we had marked the fight of the season, and I had backed Jo's bird heavily. The affair was to come off on the Sunday afternoon, and for all the week before we were so excited (Jo and I and our chums, and the Squire and his chums) that we spent every evening together, discussing our birds and our bets; not to mention the dispatching of a good deal of the Squire's home-brewed, and of my old port, and of Jo's Scotch. You see we didn't read so much in those days as you do now, and so spent more time over these lighter duties. We didn't talk very much either—one of Solomon's sermons divided among us would have lasted us all for a week; but we smoked—well, pretty steadily.

The Sunday came at last, and in the morning I sat in the corner of Solomon's pew, paying the greatest attention to him; for I wouldn't for the world he should suspect where I was going in the afternoon, or that I had the slightest interest in either Jo's bird or the Squire's. What was my horror, then, when Solomon, in the very middle of his discourse (I always knew it was the middle when he began to say "lastly"), alluded darkly to a "besetting sin of the age," as a spot at which only Satan could laugh. "And he," concluded Solomon—and I felt his eyes upon me—"chuckles with glee to see men so degrade themselves." I broke out into a damp heat. Could any one have turned traitor and told Solomon? I kept my eyes down upon the carpet, and tried to make a resolution that this should be my last cock-fight; but somehow the resolution jumbled itself up with speculations as to how the Squire would feel to-night when he was beaten, and how I should feel when I pocketed my £100 winnings.

"I shall certainly buy that colt of Jo's; and now I think of it, I may as well get Solomon a new umbrella. I dare say he didn't mean anything about cock-fighting after all. He always had whims for attacking our sports, and of course that innocent diversion must take its turn, like bowls and billiards." I had forgiven Solomon by the time he had doffed his long gown and joined me in the churchyard, and I only said, amiably, "You were rather hard upon us all to-day, as usual, Sol."

"Was I?" he questioned, in his slow way. "Hard or soft, it does but little good, Jacob."

I turned the conversation gingerly. I could not easily prove his words to be untrue, and it wouldn't be polite if I did—so I didn't.

"Good-bye, Sol," I said, with great relief, when we reached the parsonage gate.

"Shall I see you at service this evening?" was Solomon's most unfortunate inquiry, as he slowly removed his umbrella to his left hand, preparatory to giving me his right.

"I hope so, but I cannot say I am quite sure," I answered in that way for the purpose of breaking it to him as gently as I could. I knew Solomon felt this sort of thing as sharply as I felt a razor scratch in shaving, so I put it in that way, that I hoped so, but could not say that I was quite sure.

"I am sorry you are not sure, Jacob," said he. "I should have liked to see you at church to-night. I don't feel very well to-day, so will you come in now and stay the afternoon with me?"

"I wish I could, Sol," said I, as jauntily as possible, "but the fact is I have promised an old friend at Luckheaton (Luckheaton lay in the direction exactly opposite to Blagly) to go over and have a quiet chat with him. He is not able to go about much himself."

I suppose Solomon was shaking hands in his ordinary manner, but his long fingers seemed to me to have tied themselves about mine to hold me back.

"You want a new umbrella, Sol," remarked I, neatly preparing the way for the gift I had in store; and, as I thought, turning the conversation with consummate tact.

"Do I?" asked Solomon, looking down upon the machine as if he had never seen it before in his life. "We both of us want good many new things, Jacob; new habits, new aims, new—"

"Ah! yes, indeed we do," sighed I, cheerfully, as I felt the grip of his fingers relaxing. "You're looking all fancy, I'm glad to see. Don't go and fancy yourself ailing, Sol; it's a womanish trick, and not at all fanciful," he said, tucking his book tenderly under his arm. "Good-bye, then, Jacob; I shall see you again some time to-night, shall I?"

Award, that query at the end, but I nodded yes to him just as if I had known—let me see—where was I? Well, Solomon and I parted very good friends. He looked back at me with a smile as I waited; and afterwards I looked back at him—with a smile too, for at the moment I turned, a branch of his old pear tree caught his hat, (which he always wore on the back of his head) and kept it; and he walked on to the parsonage door without an idea that his hat was gone. I hurried to my study all the afternoon; and in his study most of the evening. Then he would drink his cup of strong tea, and sleep the sleep of a parson till morning, with his L— window wide open, and a square of the night sky exactly before his eyes.

"My sleep is calm," he used to say, "if my last look has been on heaven."

And calm I believe it always was, though his bed was narrow and short, and he—though narrow too—was long. Sol never could be induced to spend on me cheerfully, then, feeling pretty sure I was safe all the afternoon; and in his study most of the evening. Then he would drink his cup of strong tea, and sleep the sleep of a parson till morning, with his L— window wide open, and a square of the night sky exactly before his eyes.

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was not what struck me with such a chill, and made my eyes prick and my throat grow apoplectic. I never gave a second glance in that direction, for there, close to me, only on the opposite side of the closed gate, stood my brother Solomon. I could not have mistaken him if there had been only the very faintest flicker of light. There he was, in his long coat and his high hat, with his arms folded on the top bar of the gate, the brown book under one of them, as usual, and his eyes fixed steadily on me.

"Solomon," I said, growing very cold and uncomfortable under his gaze, "it's getting chilly for you to be out."

He did not answer that, and so presently I went cheerfully on: "I've been—remember where I said I was going—I stopped again here. I did not want to confess where I had been if he did not know, and I did not want to tell another falsehood if he did know. So I put it in that way, intending to be guided by his answer. It was so long in coming that I took heart of grace to try another tack. "Where have you been, Sol?"

Another pause, and then he answered, just in his old slow way: "I've been at home expecting you, Jacob; waiting for you until I could wait no longer."

"I'm sorry for that," I said, feeling a little cheerier to hear him speak. "I would not have been so late only I had to go round by Blagly on business. I daresay you notice that I'm coming from there now. I only went on business, Sol."

He made another pause before he answered, and though it was a trick of Solomon's, and always had been, I felt myself growing uncomfortably cold. Why could he not have stayed at home, as persons should on Sunday nights?

But the icy chill turned all at once to a clammy heat when Solomon asked me quietly, and without turning his steady gaze from my face: "How much of that filthy lucre have you now, Jacob?"

"Wh—what?" I stammered—and then you might have knocked me down with the very smallest of the feathers in Jo's winning bird—"Wh—what, Solomon?"

He repeated the question, slowly and steadily.

"How much of that filthy lucre have you now, Jacob?"

"You—you have been dreaming, Solomon."

Unlinking his long fingers, which had been clasped together on the gate, he stretched one hand towards me. "Five notes," he said, "with the unremoved gaze. "Five worthless, ill-won notes."

I clasped my breast-pocket anxiously. "I have a little money here, Sol," I said, as airily as I could, "a few pounds more or less; and I want to buy your umbrella, yours is getting shabby. I'll go into town to-morrow and choose one."

I tried to get up a little cheerfulness over it, but Solomon's gaze damped it all out of me; and, besides, he had not taken back his long, hungry, outstretched hand.

"Five notes," he said, again; "five worthless, ill-won notes, Jacob!"

"Even if I had the notes, Sol," I began, trembling like a leaf in a storm, "even if I had them—ha, ha! what an absurd idea—what should you want with them? And—and," I added, clutching desperately at a straw of courage, "what right have you to them?"

"There is no right in the question," said Solomon, and his face grew longer and longer.

"You don't often joke, Sol," said I, pretty bravely, though I was trembling like any number of aspens, "but, of course, you're joking now, and it's rather late for a joke, isn't it? Come along home with me."

"I am not going your way now," he answered.

"Shall you be home to-night?" I asked, trying to finish up the scene in my natural tones.

"To-night? It is midnight now."

"God bless my soul, is it really?" I exclaimed, not so much surprised as ridiculously flurried and nervous under my brother's intense gaze.

Solomon had shivered as the words passed my lips, and for the first time he looked away.

"Good-night," he said, in his slow, absent way, and then I think he added three other words, which he often did add to his good-byes; but he spoke so low that I scarcely heard, and I felt so angry with him, too, that I didn't even try to hear.

I walked on moodily across the heath. All the benign pleasures of the sport had been swept away in one chill blast; the only definite idea that possessed me was the determination not to buy my brother Solomon a new umbrella.

I always carried my own key, and forbade the servants to sit up for me, as you may guess I was surprised to find my groom watching for me at the gate.

"Walking, sir?" he exclaimed, meeting me with a hurried step and worried face. "I hoped you'd ride home that you might be the quicker at the parsonage. They've sent for you twenty times at least, sir. Mr. Solomon—"

"I know," I interrupted; "Mr. Solomon is missing; I've just met him. I'll go and tell them so, for I'll be bound the parish is all up in arms."

All the parish was up in arms, and had all gathered at the parsonage, as it seemed to me—but strangest of all—Solomon was there too, lying on his narrow bed opposite the open window, with the square of moonlight sky before his closed eyes.

They tell me something about a swoon or some such womanish trick; and it may be true and it may not. At any rate, I remember nothing after the first few sentences they uttered. Solomon had been ailing for some time—so the words went—and had felt worse than usual that day, and lonely and restless. Still, he had insisted on preaching in the evening, and afterwards had toiled up to my house to see if I was at home, and then toiled back to the parsonage, and had kept listening for step, while he sent again and again to see if I had returned. Just once he had risen excitedly in bed, then his strength had failed; and those who were listening heard him bid his brother good-night, with the whispered prayer—

"God bless you." Then he had lain quietly back, with his fading eyes, for that glimpse of heaven beyond the lattice window, and had died quietly at midnight.

What? The money? Don't ask me what became of the money. Over those five notes I worried myself at last into the most serious brain fever that ever man came back from into life again. They were gone. No trace could I ever find of my old pocket-book, though I made it well known that the numbers of the notes had been taken. When I did not bring them, I doubled it and offered £100. Who would care to keep them then? Who would keep five notes which were stopped, when they could receive five available ones of equal value by only bringing the worthless old pocket-book to me? But no one brought it, and then I advertised anew, offering £150 reward for those five £20 notes. Of course, I tried to make out that it was the old pocket-book I set the value on, but after all, I didn't much care who had the last against me if I could get an air of daylight right. But no— that never brought them.

Land of the Midnight Sun.

Paul Du Chailu, the noted traveler, says: There is a beautiful country far away towards the icy north. It is a glorious land, with snow, bold and magnificent mountains; deep, narrow and delightful valleys; bleak plateaux and slopes; wild ravines; clear and picturesque lakes; immense forests of white birch and fir trees; gigantic and superb glaciers, unrivaled in size by any in Europe. It is of this country I come to tell you. The rivers of this country in their hurried flights from the heights above to the valleys below, tumble down as if from heaven in gigantic waterfalls and cascades, so beautiful, so lovely, so white and chaste, so matchless in their beauty, that the beholder never tires of looking upon them. I have told you of the leading features of the country, topographically considered; let me now say a few words about the people, their mode of living, their code of morality. I have been an extensive traveler, but never in all my experience have I met with such an honest and simple class of people as the inhabitants of Norway, Sweden and Lapland. Their faith in human nature is something incredible, and their honesty exceeds all bounds. Often have I left my money behind me in a farmhouse, and as often have I been followed on the road by my late host with the treasure I forgot in my domicile. They scorn to take any reward for doing what they consider their duty, and as often as I have offered them rewards they have been rejected. They are a very religious people and a very democratic people. Of their religious simplicity, nothing could be written. They are for the most part, in fact, all Protestants or Lutherans. They bury their dead in graveyards around the churches, and if a man dies 200 miles away, his body must be brought to the graveyard and interred. A stranger can tell the condition of almost any lady he meets. Those that are engaged to be married have one plain gold ring; those who are married wear two, and those who have a family wear three. When a man's wife dies in this northern clime, the husband and his children have a better day's vacation. About their democratic ideas I cannot give you a prettier notion than by mentioning the fact that I sought an interview with the King, and was accorded the same. Before I was five minutes in the royal presence, I was asked to smoke a cigar, and at separating was asked to call again, which I did. When I returned, I had to look for the King myself, there being no guards or servants around the house. I found him putting on his coat upstairs, having just put the finishing touch on one of his dresses. A few words about the midnight sun. I witnessed this grand phenomenon while standing on Cape North, the most northern extremity of Europe. The sun, instead of setting as it does here, and running a course from east to west, keeps going around in a circle, the lower periphery of which is just on the horizon. When it makes the lower curves it is partially obscured, but it rises again and describes circles in the air for nearly two and a half months. It then goes away, but total darkness does not ensue, for the moon, the stars and the northern lights illumine the land.

The Loss of the Virginius.

All that remains of the steamer Virginius, of which so much has recently been said and written, now rests quietly at the bottom of the ocean. The ship foundered in eight fathoms of water, just off Cape Fear. Soon after the Virginius was delivered to the United States steamer Osseipee it was discovered that she was in a leaky condition, and immediately after her head had been turned northward the pumps were set to work, but notwithstanding the best efforts of the seamen, who worked manfully night and day, the water gained slowly in the hold. The ship was in this condition when Lieut. Commander David C. Woodrow was ordered to take command of her. Shortly after that he was on board he concluded that it would be impossible for the ship to reach New York. He afterward communicated this conviction to his superior officer on board the Osseipee, and advised that the Virginius be run into Charleston, which port he was sure could be made. This advice was not heeded, and the two vessels proceeded on their course to New York. On the evening of the 25th ult. the Virginius became unmanageable. The water was up to within a few inches of her boiler fires, and gaining slowly. Her commanding officer then determined to abandon her. For three days previously they had been working with the water up to their knees, and many of them were so worn out as to be hardly able to stand. Early on the morning of the 26th a boat's crew put off from the Osseipee, and at the risk of their lives, gallantly rowed through the mountainous waves to the rescue of their shipmates. The boat first took off the landsmen, then the sailors, and after all the others were in safety the officers, and gaining slowly. Her commanding officer then determined to abandon her. For three days previously they had been working with the water up to their knees, and many of them were so worn out as to be hardly able to stand. 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